

Protective Paternalism: Understanding the Hidden Face of Sexism in Politics
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Abstract

Research following the 2016 U.S. presidential election challenges the idea that gender prejudice does not impact voting behavior. Since 2016, researchers have found that hostile sexism, beliefs predicated upon the inferiority of women, correlates to educational attainment and party affiliation. However, these studies do not focus on how benevolent sexism, a set of beliefs predicated upon protective paternalism and chivalry, relate to political attitudes and behavior. In this paper, I demonstrate that hostile and benevolent sexism are uncorrelated. While adherence to hostile sexism correlates with educational attainment and party affiliation, benevolent sexism is uncorrelated to such social sorting. Using the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and socio-demographic questions on a nationally representative dataset of 993 people, I find that adherence to benevolent sexism is widespread with one exception: college educated females. While we assume large portions of the general population express low levels of sexism, only 26.85% of individuals reject both benevolent and hostile sexism. Notably, this rejection of sexism increases more than twofold amongst college educated women. This finding helps explain why it has proven so challenging to garner the support necessary to elect female candidates.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Different Faces of Sexism

In 2017, a Republican Party leader in Utah stated that men “need to make enough [money] to support their families and allow the Mother [sic] to remain in the home to raise and nurture the children” in opposition to a wage-equality bill.¹ In this statement, the Republican Party leader introduces different faces of sexism: ideas predicated upon women’s inferiority and need for protection. Using protective paternalism, he places ‘the Mother’ on a pedestal for child-rearing and homemaking. By arguing that men should be earning enough money to ‘allow the Mother’ to stay home, the leader also reinforces the flagrant belief that women are more valuable in the home than the workforce. In this statement, the leader exemplifies just how present different dimensions of sexism are in the minds of citizens—a phenomenon often overlooked in American politics.

To capture the implications of gender prejudice similar to the belief voiced by the GOP leader, scholars have used the 2016 election to reexamine how sexism motivates vote-choice. This growing body of research indicates that prejudicial and ‘extreme sexism’ is predictive of Trump support and that this is most exaggerated amongst low-income, and non-college educated women (Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018; Bock, Byrd-Craven, and Burkley 2017; Ratliff et al. 2019; Cassese and Barnes 2018).

These studies, however, do not focus on the protective paternalism aspect of the Republican leader’s argument. By focusing on flagrantly sexist beliefs, the research overlooks the extent to which voters are impacted by all dimensions of sexism. Given how important sexism was in 2016, it is critical to better understand both flagrant and chivalrous dimensions of

¹ James C. Green, “Equal Pay Bill Has a Serious Downside,” *Park Record*, February 14, 2017, sec. Letters to the Editor, Feb. 15-17, 2017, <https://www.parkrecord.com/opinion/letters/letters-to-the-editor-feb-15-17-2017/>.

sexism, the relationships between them, and their independent relationships to party identification, educational attainment, and gender. My research looks to expand how we understand the prevalence of all dimensions of sexism and how widespread adherence impacts political attitudes.

How do we measure sexism?

To understand the scope of these prior studies, it is imperative that I define sexism and explain how it is measured in political science research. In an effort to capture an intersectionality of political and gender attitudes, political science research has paired the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory with an index of political and socio-demographic questions.

Developed in the 1990s by psychologists Glick and Fiske, the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory is used to measure sexism across disciplines. It includes a series of statements “concerning women, men, and their relationships in contemporary society” (Glick and Fiske 1996, Appendix). Participants rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements on a numerical scale, usually ranging from one to six. Responses are then coded and averaged to categorize the extent to which an individual adheres to sexism.

Notably, participants are measured on two dimensions of sexism: hostile and benevolent.² These definitions are expanded upon in the literature review of this paper; however, it is important to distinguish that hostile sexism is founded on a belief that women’s incompetence and inferiority make them incapable to hold positions of power (Glick and Fiske 1996).

² While this paper focuses only on the hostile and benevolent measurements, the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory introduces a third category called ambivalent sexism. Ambivalent sexism relates to individuals who score high on both benevolent and hostile sexism (Glick and Fiske 1996). Despite the differences between hostile and benevolent sexism, it is not uncommon for individuals to adhere to both sets of attitudes. This simultaneous adherence to both types of sexism is coined as ‘ambivalent’ because, in this category, individuals hold both positive (benevolent) and negative (hostile) feeling tones towards women—two subjectively opposite constructs.

Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, is a set of stereotypical beliefs toward women that express a sense of protective paternalism and chivalry. These beliefs rely upon traditional gender roles to place women on pedestals (Glick and Fiske 1996).³

The Focus on Hostile Sexism

While the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory includes equal statements for measuring benevolent and hostile sexism, political scientists have focused on those for hostile sexism. This trend is due to the fact that hostile sexism has traditionally been shown to be the greater predictor of vote-choice. Early research on the 2016 election corroborates this (Bock, Byrd-Craven, and Burkley 2017; Ratliff et al. 2019).

Because of the strength of the relationship between hostile sexism and vote-choice, many studies choose to include only hostile sexism inventory statements. While establishing the relationship between hostile sexism and vote-choice has expanded our understanding, it has also led to a discrepancy; the role of benevolent sexism in politics remains unclear. This gap in our understanding is complicated by the fact that prior to 2016 adherence to sexism was largely not recognized as vote-motivating.

There is little research focusing on how less visible and potentially more socially acceptable dimensions of sexism, such as benevolent, inform political attitudes. While the scale was designed to measure two separate dimensions of sexism, few studies explore how hostile and benevolent sexism correlate to one another. If the two kinds of sexism are uncorrelated, what is benevolent sexism indicating about individuals' gender attitudes and vote-choice? We know

³ In the case of the GOP leader, he expressed hostile sexism through his argument that women are most valuable in the home and benevolent sexism through his argument that women should be cherished for their abilities to raise and nurture children.

from existing literature on the 2016 election that hostile sexism correlates with education and partisanship. Does benevolent sexism also correlate with education and partisanship? If not, what are the socio-demographics that predict adherence to benevolent sexism? Does benevolent sexism impact voting behavior?

Considering these ambiguities, I argue that our focus on hostile sexism has led scholarship to ignore important parts of the electorate. I counter that benevolent sexism is an imperative measure to understand because it offers information about people who do not score high on the hostile sexism dimension but who are, nonetheless, informed by sexism.

How do hostile and benevolent sexism relate to one another?

The questions stated above are the framework of my research. Using a representative national survey that combines statements from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory with demographic questions, my analysis is three-fold in its focus: (1) the relationship between hostile sexism, education, and partisanship; (2) the strength of the correlation between hostile and benevolent sexism; and (3) how gender impacts adherence to dimensions of sexism.

I. Hostile Sexism, Education, and Partisanship

First, I examine the strength of the correlation between hostile sexism, educational attainment, and party affiliation. Research from the 2016 election illustrates that adherence to hostile sexism is significant because of its relationship with partisanship and education. Based upon this research, along with theories on prejudice, I expect to find that education and party identification correlate with adherence to hostile sexism. Such a finding would not only confirm previous scholarship, but also substantiate the significance of hostile sexism in informing vote-choice.

II. Why It Makes Sense for Hostile and Benevolent Sexism to be Uncorrelated

Then, I examine the relationship between hostile and benevolent sexism. If both dimensions of sexism interact and manifest uniformly, then we can expect both types of sexism to be correlated. This finding would mean that benevolent sexism predicts education and party with the same strength that hostile sexism does. It would signify that there is only one sexism story. It would follow that as educational attainment increases and partisanship moves from Republican to Democratic, people are less likely to adhere to any level of sexism. Moreover, this likeliness to not adhere would occur at the same rate across sexism dimensions.

However, I reject this argument. As an index developed to measure two different dimensions of sexism, I propose that hostile and benevolent remain mostly uncorrelated. Thus, there are two different sexism stories occurring simultaneously. While hostile sexism correlates to educational attainment and party affiliation, I argue that we should not expect this same relationship for benevolent sexism. For one, benevolent sexism is not understood to be prejudicial in the same ways as hostile sexism (Barreto and Ellemers 2005). Thus, educational effects that mitigate prejudice like openness and contact are no longer relevant.

Additionally, while there is a compelling argument that hostile sexism is not acceptable in more educated social environments because of normative pressures—which may be absent in less educated ones—benevolent sexism remains acceptable by college and non-college educated individuals alike. For instance, while it may only be socially acceptable to express that “women are too easily offended” in less educated environments (hostile sexism item), it is likely socially acceptable in both college-educated and working class communities to remark that “women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste” (benevolent sexism item; Glick and Fisk 1996, Appendix).

Using these two inventory item examples, I put forth the argument that while hostile sexism may be accepted only in less educated environments or more politically conservative areas, benevolent sexism is accepted in all social sorting spheres.

III. Role of Gender in Adherence to Sexism

While I expect benevolent and hostile sexism to have different relationships with education and partisanship, it is also important to understand the role that gender plays in adherence to both dimensions of sexism. Based on prior scholarship, there is reason to believe that women are less likely to express hostile sexist attitudes (Glick and Fiske 1996). Because of the prevalence of benevolent sexism though, I expect that both men and women are just as likely to score on benevolent measures. This will be the case regardless of education and party affiliation with the exception of one group: college educated females. I anticipate that adherence to benevolent sexism amongst college educated females—who are consistently Democratic voters—will be disproportionately lower than the adherence of their non-college educated female and college educated male counterparts.

To summarize, the organization of this paper is as follows. Chapter Two begins by focusing on the definitional aspects to understanding sexism, the empirical context of using race to explore sexism, and the relationship between sexism and politics prior to and during the 2016 election. This existing scholarship is significant because it illustrates how we research sexism and understand its interaction with political behavior. The review of literature is followed by my hypotheses and research design, data analysis, and the implications of the presented findings on the intersectionality of sexism, education, partisanship, and gender.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Motivation

How do we understand and define sexism?

To understand why sexism adherence is widespread, it is necessary to examine the role that gender plays in society. Of the many characteristics that shape people, gender is considered dominant in forming identity. The internalization of gender has historically been understood as one of the quickest and strongest origins of group identity (Maccoby 1998). In fact, individuals use gender to sort people more than characteristics like age or race (as seen in Glick and Fiske 1996). Because individuals use group identity to sort in- and out-groups, prejudices and biases are born from these internalized gender identities.

Through this sorting of groups, gender is a structure of power relations that results in male dominance (Martínez et al. 2010). It has led to prejudice and discrimination against women. Despite progress for gender equality, sexism persists across gender and race (Glick and Fiske 1996; McNair Barnett 1993; Tate 2004). In contemporary society, prejudice against women has become increasingly covert.⁴ The subtleness of modern sexism poses challenges for measurement. To help combat this challenge and encapsulate a multitude of sexist expressions, psychologists have relied on distinctions between benevolent and hostile sexism.

I. Benevolent Sexism

As outlined above, benevolent sexism focuses on a set of stereotypical beliefs that reward women for following traditional gender roles; it represents interrelated attitudes that women are in need of protection and provision (Glick and Fiske 1996). Benevolent sexism is often associated with the gender structures imposed by traditional forms of marriage and religion. Because adherence to traditional gender roles occurs across genders, adherence to benevolent

⁴ Nijole V. Benokraitis and Joe R. Feagin, *Modern Sexism: Blatant, Subtle, and Covert Discrimination*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1986).

sexism is found in both men and women (Glick and Fiske 1996). One example of a statement that has been developed to measure benevolent sexism is “many women have a quality of purity that few men possess” (Glick and Fiske 1996, Appendix).

II. Hostile Sexism

Unlike benevolent sexism, hostile sexism is predicated upon the prejudices that women are inferior and unfit. This type of sexism stokes negative attitudes toward norm-violating women (Glick and Fiske 1996; Bock, Byrd-Craven, and Burkley 2017). Hostile sexism suggests that women are confined to domesticity less because of traditional or religious attitudes, but more because they are incapable of the skills needed to exert power (Glick and Fiske 1996). An example of a statement that has been employed to measure hostile sexism is “many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for ‘equality’” (Glick and Fiske 1996, Appendix).

Needless to say, the prejudicial nature of hostile sexism leads men to adhere to such attitudes more than women (Glick and Fiske 1996). It is important to note that sexist backlash is incited most when traditional gender norms are activated and male dominance is challenged simultaneously (Barnes, Beaulieu, and Saxton 2018). This backlash is especially present when examining women in politics.

The Empirical Context for Measuring Sexism

While I have covered the definitions of sexism from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory above, I now detail the existing literature on the history and efficacy of the inventory.

I. Using Race to Explore Sexism

To empirically understand the relationship between sexist attitudes and politics, I highlight a parallel between sexism and racism. This connection is well recognized, intertwined by their social movements of change and studied in regard to the cognitive processing of stereotyping and prejudice (Swim et al. 1995). Dovidio et al. state “that many of the critical elements of modern racism [relate] to sexism” (as quoted in Swim et al. 1995, 199). These elements are linked through the challenges they pose for measuring prejudice and how they have evolved in contemporary society.

One reason that it is difficult to accurately measure sexism and racism is the normative pressures perceived in U.S. society to reject flagrantly prejudicial remarks (McConahay 1986). With normative pressure, researchers are challenged to create measures that parse the differences between traditional marriage beliefs, political sophistication, symbolic prejudice, and ideology. As one example, researchers are tasked not to conflate sexism with conservatism.

To develop sexism measures that uncover both blatant and covert sexist attitudes, researchers have adopted distinctions used in racial resentment research. In the late 1980’s, psychologists first distinguished old-fashioned gender beliefs from modern ones, as had been done with old-fashioned and modern racism. Like modern racism, Swim et al. argue that modern sexism no longer reflects an open endorsement of traditional gender roles and differential treatment of women and men (traditional sexism). Instead, contemporary sexism has transitioned to reflect a denial of discrimination and lack of support for policies that promote gender equality (modern sexism; Swim et al. 1995).

To prove this transition, Swim et al. conduct the first major study to examine the prevalence of modern sexism and strength of its association to modern racism. As the researchers anticipate, they find that there is a statistical difference between modern and old-fashioned

sexism (Swim et al. 1995). Similar to modern racism findings, they discover that modern sexism is more prevalent than traditional sexism amongst their survey participants (Swim et al. 1995).

The distinction between old-fashioned and modern sexism is expanded upon one year later with the development of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. Through the index, Glick and Fiske further parse the differences in expressed gender attitudes by introducing hostile and benevolent sexism (1996). While other scales exist, the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory remains the single most employed scale to measure sexism in psychology and political science (Tougas et al. 1995).

II. Limitations of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

This is not to say that the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory is without its limitations. First, it is critical to acknowledge that this scale was designed over two decades ago. Our understandings of sexism and gender have evolved since. Second, these measurements work within a context of heteronormativity and binary gender classifications. Because progressive attitudes on partnership and gender are not reflected in the statements, it is possible that the inventory elicits polarizing responses to traditional gender roles.

It may also create confusion for participants who may agree with a statement, but not within its heteronormative framework.⁵ Finally, while the scale was created with the intent to parse differences between types of sexism and other sets of beliefs, it is hard to ensure that this

⁵ One example of this possibility for confusion is evident through the benevolent sexism statement that “every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.” Participants may agree with the sentiment that “every man ought to have a *partner* whom he adores,” but do not feel as though it is necessary for that partner to be a woman. In this case, respondents are asked to decide how to best respond. With their answers of disagreement, though, the researcher is unable to distinguish between their rejection of the argument as a whole, or their specific rejection to the heteronormative paradigm of the argument.

always happens.⁶ Concerns regarding confounding variables and antiquated language are legitimate.

Nonetheless, I argue that the inventory remains relevant; the responses informed by a belief in the institution of marriage or a rejection of heteronormativity are not necessarily contradictory to the inventory. Marriage as an institution is built within a patriarchal framework. Individuals who believe in marriage, likely also adhere—at least to some extent—to the very beliefs defined by benevolent sexism (Glick and Fiske 1996). Therefore, while benevolent sexism may include traditional marriage values in its measurements, I argue that these two sets of attitudes are not contrary. Conversely, a rejection of heteronormativity suggests an adherence to progressive beliefs and ideals that move against patriarchal systems (Glick and Fiske 1996).

Though the inventory has an antiquated structure, I ultimately offer that it continues to be a pertinent measurement based upon the finding that people are still scoring high on both hostile and benevolent sexism dimensions. While the index may lack ability to fully detect covert sexism or normative pressures, the findings of high levels of adherence suggest that it is better at identifying sexism in the general population than we may assume.

By studying responses to the inventory in relation to partisanship, education, and gender, along with controlling for age, race, geography, and income, I have tried to limit confounding variables. With these controls and regression analyses, I have used socio-demographic questions to help further parse the differences between sexism, political sophistication, symbolic prejudice, and ideology.

⁶ For instance, participants may interpret the benevolent sexism statement that people need to be romantically involved to truly be happy as a question about one's belief in the institution of marriage. In turn, some participants' agreement in that statement may be rooted in a belief that marriage betters each partner, not in the belief that women are unable to achieve happiness without men.

The Relationship between Sexism and Politics

While political scientists have long found evidence to be inconclusive that sexism and gender stereotypes influence voting behavior (Dolan 2014; Dwyer et al. 2009; Gervais and Hillard 2011), recent research has made it irrefutable (e.g., Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018; Cassese and Barnes 2018; Ratliff et al. 2019; Bracic, Israel-Trummel, and Shortle 2019). At least on some level, sexism impacts how individuals respond to politics.

To name only a few examples, recent scholarship illustrates how sexist attitudes impact the manner and extent to which an individual: holds a politician—depending on their gender—accountable in times of scandal (Barnes, Beaulieu, and Saxton 2018); interprets negative media coverage of female politicians (Bracic, Israel-Trummel, and Shortle 2018); evaluates the warmth and competence of a politician (Schlehofer et al. 2011); responds to politicized women’s issues like access to birth control and abortions (Simas and Bumgardner 2017); identifies with a political candidate and ideology (Simas and Bumgardner 2017; Cassese and Barnes 2019); and stokes emotions like anger and fear (Valentino, Wayne, and Ocenio 2018).

I. Sexism and Voting before 2016

Despite the above research on how sexism affects political perceptions and decisions, studies prior to 2016 find that sexism does not impact political perceptions. Dwyer et al. find that, while racism impacted candidate evaluations, sexism ceased to impact such evaluations when interacted with party identification (2009). In accordance with Dwyer et al.’s finding, Dolan indicates that party identification is a better predictor of candidate evaluation than gender stereotype endorsement through her abstract gender stereotype measurement (2014). Further, Dolan finds that these abstracts stereotypes do not shape vote choice (2014). Lawless predicts

such findings in overviewing how observers and analysts alike agree that Clinton did not lose the Democratic nomination in 2008 because of her gender (2009).

In contrast to these studies, though, a 2009 survey found that 25% of the US population believed that men were “better emotionally suited to politics” than women (as seen in Carlin and Winfrey 2009). While this example focuses on perceptions of politicians rather than vote-choice, it demonstrates just how pervasive sexism is in politics. It questions how sexism could not be a factor in vote-choice. If female candidates are perceived as being ill-suited for politics in mainstream America, then how can we expect that belief to not be reflected in polls?

II. Sexism and Voting in 2016

This question of sexism in voting behavior came to the forefront in the 2016 presidential election. One study finds this to be the first presidential election year where sexism played a significant role in mobilizing votes (Valentino, Wayne, and Oceno 2018). In part, scholars have attributed this to the fact that gender attitudes were activated more in this national election than previous ones (Bracic, Israel-Trummel, and Shortle 2018).

Regardless of whether this activation is unique to 2016, the connection between hostile sexism and Trump favorability is evident. In a national representative survey, Schaffner et al. find that strict adherence to hostile sexism indicated a .66 probability of voting for Trump amongst participants who were average on other model variables (2018). Bracic et al. illustrate that the effect of sexism was clearest for white voters (2018).

This was magnified by the fact that anger strengthened how voters were motivated by sexism (Valentino, Wayne, and Oceno 2018). Voting blocs participated because of a determination to prevent the election of a female president. Anger and sexism in this case dovetailed to generate hostile sexist backlash. The backlash was triggered as Clinton activated

gender norms, while also challenging a male for a position that has long been associated with male dominance. As Valentino et al. argue, this created the perfect storm (2018).

How Lessons from 2016 on Hostile Sexism Relate to Benevolent Sexism

I. Education and Sexism in the 2016 Electorate

It is important to recognize that these emotions of anger and attitudes of sexism do not stoke backlash and mobilize votes uniformly. Considering that in exit polls Trump had nearly a 40-point margin over Hillary Clinton among non-college educated whites, it is evident that educational attainment was integral to the 2016 election.⁷ Cassese and Barnes highlight how educational attainment impacted adherence to sexism (2019).

Based on both 2016 scholarship and research on how education lessens prejudice, I expect educational attainment to continue impacting hostile sexism. Research has shown that higher education decreases the prejudices and increases the openness of an individual (Bowman 2014). Beyond openness, higher education increases contact between diverse individuals. Consistent with contact theories, research finds that increased interaction in college settings mitigates racial and sexual prejudice (Van Laar et al. 2005; Jayakumar 2009). Based upon findings that education informs civic engagement, we can infer that such openness and contact impact political perceptions (e.g., Verba, Lehman Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

Other research has established that there is an educational effect. That ‘effect’ impacts individuals’ political sophistication, party identification, and ideology (e.g., Highton 2009;

⁷ Jon Huang, Samuel Jacoby, Michael Strickland, and K.K. Rebecca Lai, “Election 2016: Exit Polls,” 8 November 2016, accessed at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/11/08/us/politics/election-exit-polls.html>, 10 April 2020.

Marshall 2019). Notably, the ‘effect’ theory suggests that it is the higher education itself that is decreasing adherence to hostile sexism.

Competing theories focus on selection. Selection effects imply that it is not a college degree itself that is mitigating hostile sexism. Instead, it is the selection process through which individuals who are less likely to adhere to sexism—maybe based upon their socio-economic, political, or geographical background—are also the ones who are more likely to attend college (Lawrence et al. 1979).

Moving beyond education itself and selection bias, it is critical to assess what occurs in collegiate settings through normative pressures. At institutions for higher education, individuals are exposed to specific sets of norms. Students use peers in these environments as membership groups from which they learn sociocultural norms (Clark and Trow 1966; Feldman and Newcomb 1969). This suggests that we learn what is acceptable from those around us.

While we do not know whether it is selection, normative pressure, or college education itself that is mitigating hostile sexism, it is evident that higher levels of educational attainment decrease hostile sexism. This relationship remains undetermined for benevolent sexism. Should we expect higher education and the normative pressures on college campuses to mitigate beliefs surrounding paternalism, chivalry, and provision?

In a study on sexism and the Catholic Church in Spain, Glick et al. examine how educational attainment independently impacted hostile and benevolent sexism (2002). As one of the only studies dedicated to examining both dimensions of sexism, they emphasize that,

“When considering the role that social institutions may play in either reinforcing or challenging sexist beliefs, it is important to distinguish between the different forms of sexism these institutions are likely to effect” (Glick, Lameiras, and Rodriguez Castro 2002, 434).

The idea that an institution may impact hostile and benevolent sexism differently serves as the groundwork for my hypotheses.

As Glick et al. suggest in their study on the Catholic Church, I propose that higher education as an institution does not challenge or reinforce adherence to sexist beliefs uniformly. Just because education challenges hostile sexism, does not mean that we know how it challenges benevolent sexism.

I further posit this argument in existing research on sexism in relation to political attack campaigns and attitudes toward abortion (Osborne and Davies 2012; Huang et al. 2014; Cassese and Holman 2019). In studies on gendered political attacks and elective abortions, researchers find that benevolent sexism distinctly predicted participants' responses (Osborne and Davies 2012; Huang et al. 2014; Cassese and Holman 2019). For instance, cross-sectional research demonstrates that benevolent sexism—not hostile—predicts attitudes toward abortions (Huang et al. 2014). Similarly, exposing hostile sexists to a gendered attack increases their support for Trump. Benevolent sexists exposed to the very same attack, on the other hand, are motivated to protect Clinton (Cassese and Holman 2019).

While few studies examine how education challenges benevolent sexism, I propose that the research referenced above introduces how each dimension of sexism elicits specific responses from individuals. Just as hostile and benevolent sexism motivate distinct responses to abortion and gendered attacks, I expect the two dimensions of sexism to predict educational attainment and party identification differently.

II. Gender and Sexism in the 2016 Electorate

It is also essential to examine how gender impacts adherence to sexism. As is outlined in the beginning of this section, gender plays an important role in identity establishment. Gender

has also proven to impact political attitudes and perceptions. Cassese and Barnes extend analysis on white voters in the 2016 election by specifically examining low-income white women (2019). They find that class divisiveness and candidate support vary depending on one's gender (Cassese and Barnes 2019).

While gender impacts political attitudes, women are not unified voting blocs (Junn 2017). Given this, I propose a parallel: while gender impacts adherence to sexism, this does not mean that women are unified in their adherence. In fact, women are only unified in their rejection of hostile sexism (Glick and Fiske 1996). This unification dissipates with benevolent sexism (Glick and Fiske 1996).

Regardless of the role that educational attainment and gender have in informing sexism, existing scholarship is conclusive that adherence to hostile sexism predicted favorability of and vote-choice for Trump in the 2016 election. Whether these findings are unique to this election or not, they begin to convey just how tied sexism is to politics.

Why does benevolent sexism matter?

While existing scholarship from the 2016 election suggests that benevolent sexism is not the cause for variance in vote-choice, this does not negate its importance (Ratliff et al. 2019). Hostile sexism creates large variance in vote-choice because adherence to it changes depending upon the identity of an individual. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, remains constant throughout. Thus, benevolent sexism matters not because of its impact on vote-choice variance but because of its widespread adherence. It is meaningful because nearly all individuals ascribe to it and are, in turn, informed by it.

It is critical to underscore that such widespread adherence to benevolent sexism has implications for women. Though benevolent sexism is often overlooked as the less negative dimension of the two, its affects are not benign. Researchers have emphasized that benevolent sexism minimizes agency, perpetuates marginalization, and constraints women's ability to attain leadership positions (as outlined by Ratliff et al. 2019).

My research framework contributes to existing scholarship by expanding how we understand sexism in relation to vote-choice, political perception, and intersectionality. It develops political science research on sexism by examining how benevolent sexism motivates and informs voting behavior. An understanding of the multivariate relationships between hostile and benevolent sexism, education, partisanship, and gender helps expose how sexism is understood throughout society—not just amongst less educated, lower income, or more white communities.

Without this understanding, there is no way to grasp just how pervasive sexism is in politics or to know how to respond to it. This perception of sexism and how it manifests amongst voters is essential to uncovering the motivating factors that led to the 2016 election and more broadly how different dimensions of sexism interact with voting behavior.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Sexism and Socio-demographic Indices in the Survey

To test the relationships between sexism, education, partisanship, and gender, I analyze a nationally representative survey of American adults. The survey was administered online and fielded by political scientist, Brian Schaffner (2019). For this dataset, subjects were recruited from Lucid and sent a survey programmed in Qualtrics. Online responses to the survey were

collected from 31 July to 1 August 2019.⁸ After collection, post-stratification rake weighting was applied to the survey of 993 Americans to certify that the sample was representative of the national adult population on gender, age, race, education, and region.

In the survey, participants respond to socio-demographic questions related to their age, educational attainment, gender, annual income, political party, and geographical region.⁹

Respondents then indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with sexism inventory statements on a one through six scale. The scale ranges from: (1) disagree strongly; (2) disagree somewhat; (3) disagree slightly; (4) slightly agree; (5) somewhat agree; to (6) strongly agree.

To measure adherence to sexism, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement on the scale to eleven hostile and eleven benevolent sexism statements. The sexism statements used in my research are provided in Appendix A. Respondents were not told which statements were measuring hostile or benevolent sexism, only that the “statements concern women, men, and their relationships in contemporary society” (Glick and Fiske 1996, Appendix).

From the twenty-two sexism index statements, respondents’ answers were averaged for a hostile and benevolent score ranging from one to six. Instructions on how to score these sexism statements are in Appendix B. Based on existing literature, I categorize participants as adhering to benevolent and/or hostile sexism if their average scores on each dimension are above three and a half. Scoring above three and a half on either dimension is used as the threshold because it signifies the moment that a response goes from slightly disagreeing to slightly agreeing.

⁸ While self-reporting has been criticized for skewing data, this survey was conducted online, increasing both the number of participants and sincere responding. In using a dataset with online reporting, I help mitigate the tendencies of people to report warmer feelings and perceive normative pressures when face-to-face with their surveyor (Liu and Wang 2015).

⁹ Additionally, the survey included questions regarding ethnicity, politician favorability, and ideology. However, I do not examine the data from those questions in my research.

Individuals who consistently express agreement to sexist statements are classified as adhering to either one or both dimension of sexism. It is possible for individuals to be classified as any one of these four combinations: (1) adhere to neither benevolent nor hostile sexism; (2) adhere only to benevolent sexism; (3) adhere only to hostile sexism; or (4) adhere to both hostile and benevolent sexism. I return to these combinations in Table 1 of my data analysis.

Hypotheses on the Relationships between Sexism, Education, Partisanship, and Gender

Based on existing scholarship on education, party affiliation, and sexism in the 2016 election, I anticipate both educational attainment and partisanship to be highly correlated with sexism. Specifically, I expect that as an individual's education increases and partisanship moves from Republican to Democratic, their adherence to hostile sexism decreases (**Hypothesis 1**). If this hypothesis is confirmed, I anticipate that college educated Democrats score the lowest on the hostile sexism scale while non-college educated Republicans score the highest.

From this hypothesis, I move to examine the relationship between hostile and benevolent sexism. Understanding the correlation between these two dimensions of sexism provides insight into how I can expect social sorting through education and partisanship to impact benevolent sexism. Based on the relatively weak statistical correlation found by Glick and Fiske during their development of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, along with the differences between the two dimensions outlined in my theoretical motivation, I do not expect hostile and benevolent sexism to be strongly correlated (**Hypothesis 2**; 1996).

With the expectation that hostile and benevolent sexism are uncorrelated, I anticipate benevolent sexism to be less correlated with educational attainment and party identification than hostile (**Hypothesis 3**). Unlike hostile sexism, I do not expect partisanship or education to

mitigate adherence to benevolent sexism. If this hypothesis is confirmed, I anticipate that adherence to benevolent sexism is widespread across educational and partisan lines.

Because gender is integral to sexism, it is critical that I examine how gender interacts with adherence to both benevolent and hostile sexism. In accordance with research on the development of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, it is likely for my data to depict that being female predicts a lack of adherence to hostile sexism (Glick and Fiske 1996). Gender should cease to matter for benevolent sexism, though. Extensive adherence to benevolent sexism is expected to be unilateral with one exception: college educated females (**Hypothesis 4**). As a group disproportionately identified as Democratic, I expect the cross-pressures experienced by college educated females to mitigate adherence to benevolent sexism. If this finding is confirmed, I anticipate that the only variance in adherence to benevolent sexism comes from college educated women.

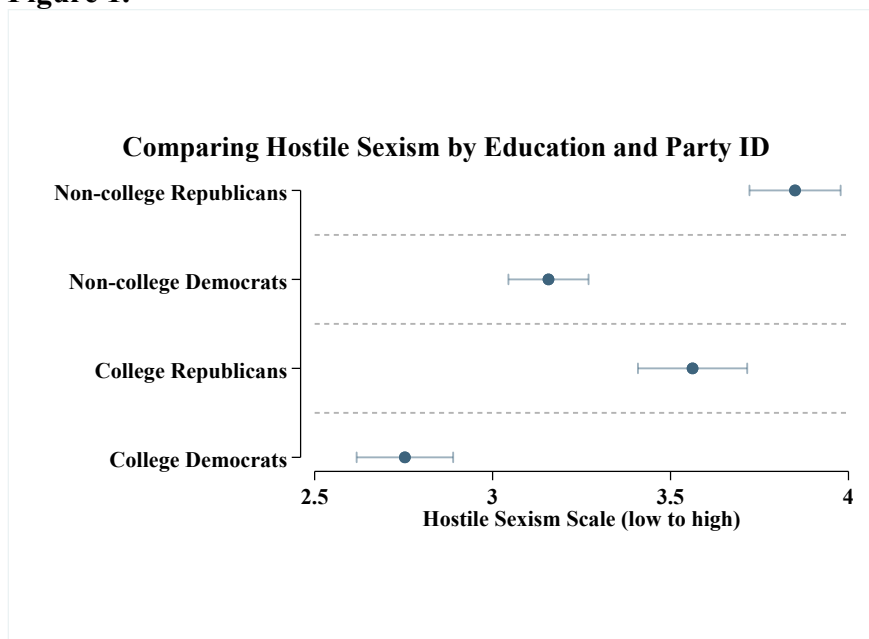
Chapter Four: Statistical Findings

My empirical analysis begins with confirming the relationship between hostile sexism, educational attainment, and partisanship. Using multivariate analysis, I examine the extent to which education level and party identification correlate to hostile sexism in Figure 1. With this analysis, I compare aggregate mean hostile sexism scores by education and party identification. Confirming my hypothesis, hostile sexism decreases both as educational attainment increases, and partisanship moves from Republican to Democratic. I find that education is significant to adherence to sexism both amongst Democrats and Republicans.

On the one to six sexism scale, the mean score for adherence to hostile sexism amongst all participants is 3.32. In Figure 1, moving from the bottom end of the y-axis (college educated

Democrats) to the top (non-college educated Republicans) results in an increase of mean score by 18%. Moreover, the difference between the hostile scores of non-college and college partisans were over .4-points. Put another way, college education for both Democrats and Republicans predicts a decrease in adherence to hostile sexism by nearly a half point on the six-point scale. While education decreases hostile sexism, both college educated and non-college educated Democrats are less likely to be hostile sexists than their Republican counterparts.

Figure 1.



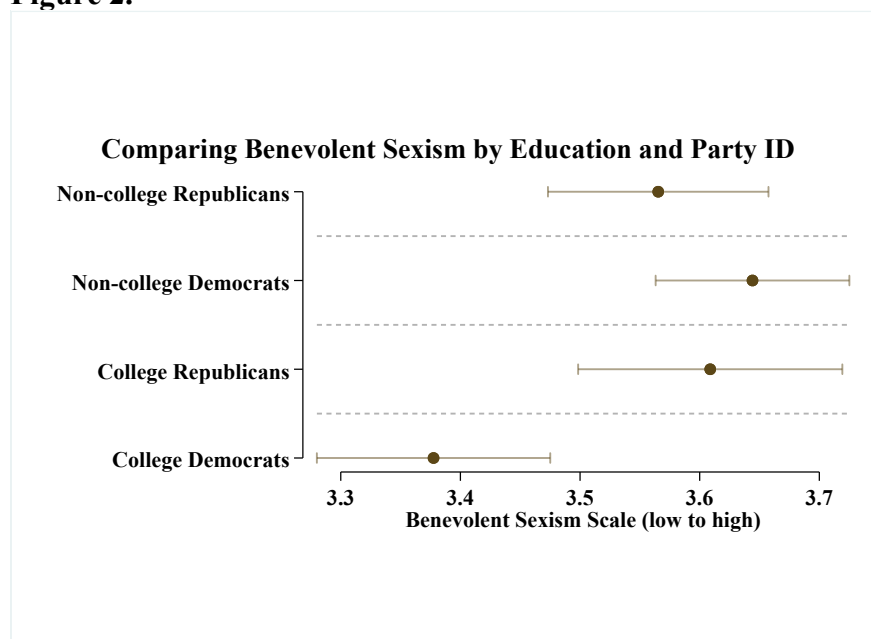
Note. Adherence to hostile sexism, by subgroups of education and party identification. Mean scores are calculated by averaging participants' responses to hostile sexism statements on a six-point scale and then weighted to be representative of a national sample. Difference of means with 95% confidence intervals are shown. This figure demonstrates two main findings: (1) college education mitigates adherence to hostile sexism for both Republicans and Democrats; and (2) Democratic party identification correlates with lower levels of adherence to hostile sexism.

To understand whether we should expect this relationship between education, partisanship, and hostile sexism to extend to benevolent sexism, I then examine the correlation between the two dimensions of sexism. As predicted in Hypothesis 2, I find that hostile and

benevolent sexism are uncorrelated ($r = .15$). This finding that $r^2 = .0225$ is significant. It indicates a weak relationship between the two dimensions of sexism.

This means adhering to one dimension of sexism has little bearing on the other. Ergo, an individual's adherence to hostile sexism is not predictive of their adherence to benevolent sexism. The lack of correlation between hostile and benevolent sexism also signifies that education and partisanship do not impact adherence uniformly.

Figure 2.



Note. Adherence to benevolent sexism, by subgroups of education and party identification. Mean scores are calculated by averaging participants' responses to benevolent sexism statements on a six-point scale and then weighted to be representative of a national sample. Difference of means with 95% confidence intervals are shown. This figure demonstrates two main findings: (1) adherence to benevolent sexism is widespread regardless of educational attainment or party identification; and (2) the only variance in this widespread adherence is due to college democrats.

Instead, as I predict, it is possible that education and partisanship do not correlate with adherence to benevolent sexism as they do with hostile sexism. This possibility is explored through Hypothesis 3. Replicating the multivariate analysis used in Figure 1, I examine the relationship between education, party affiliation and benevolent sexism in Figure 2. With the analysis in Figure 2, I find that adherence to benevolent sexism is relatively static regardless of

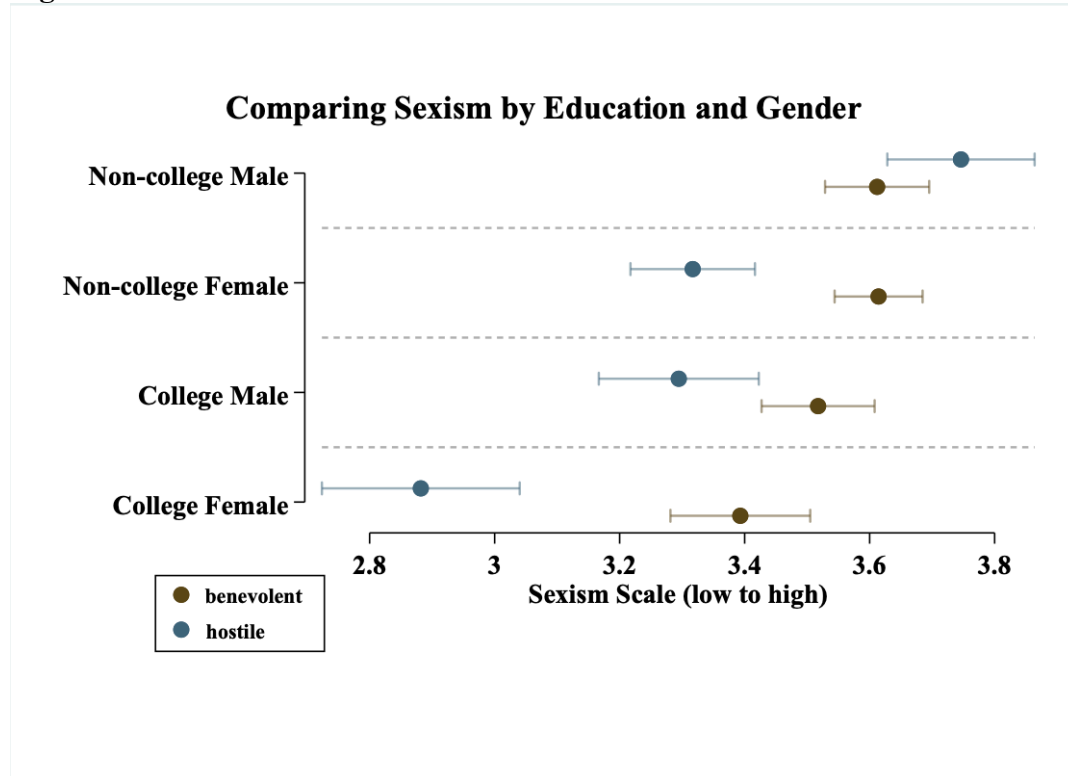
education and party. These similar scores are especially highlighted in comparison to the steady decline in Figure 1 of adherence to hostile sexism, as education increases, and participants become more Democratically affiliated.

The mean score for adherence to benevolent sexism amongst all participants is 3.57. This represents nearly a quarter point aggregate mean increase on the six-point scale. In Figure 2, the top three categories on the y-axis—non-college Republicans, non-college Democrats, and college Republicans—represent mean scores of adherences to benevolent sexism within a range of .07. With a variance of mean scores within .07 of one another, we see that adherence to benevolent sexism remains relatively the same throughout those three categories. This demonstrates extensive adherence to benevolent sexism.

The exception to this lack of variance comes from college educated democrats. To help explore why this variation is occurring for college educated democrats, I pivot to investigate the role of gender in adherence to benevolent sexism. While I do not find benevolent sexism to be predictive of gender, I find gender to be significant amongst college educated democrats.

In Figure 3, I compare both dimensions of sexism by education and gender. In this multivariate analysis, I confirm that men are more likely to adhere to hostile sexism. For benevolent sexism, gender matters less. Notably, I also uncover which group is driving low levels of adherence to benevolent sexism amongst college educated participants: college educated females. While college educated men score lower than non-college educated individuals, college educated females provide the most variance in adherence to benevolent sexism. In the non-college categories, men and women adhere to benevolent sexism at the same rate. In the college categories, on the other hand, college educated women receive a mean score that is 0.13-points below their male counterparts.

Figure 3.



Note. Adherence to both benevolent and hostile sexism, by subgroups of education and gender. Mean scores are calculated by averaging participants' responses to hostile and benevolent sexism statements on a six-point scale and then weighted to be representative of a national sample. Difference of means with 95% confidence intervals are shown. This figure demonstrates three main findings: (1) men adhere to hostile sexism at a disproportionate rate to their female counterparts; (2) adherence to benevolent sexism occurs regardless of educational attainment and gender; and (3) the only variance in this widespread adherence to benevolent sexism is due to college educated females.

To further explain and provide scope for the variance of sexism adherence, Table 1 divides individuals into one of four quadrants. Table 1 reveals just how rare it is for participants to not measure on either sexism dimension. Only 26.85% of the entire representative sample receives a mean score below three and a half on all twenty-two benevolent and hostile sexism statements. This signifies that 73% of people measure as sexist on at least one dimension.

As introduced in Figure 3 and reiterated in Table 1, the percentage of individuals who do not express benevolent or hostile attitudes increases amongst college educated females. Nearly 53% of college educated females do not register on either dimension of sexism. In fact, once

educated females are excluded from Quadrant A in Table 1, 22.4% of the remaining sample does not adhere to benevolent or hostile sexism. While educated females account for only 14.6% of the representative sample, they contribute disproportionately to Quadrant A. College educated females are nearly two and a half times more likely to reject both dimensions of sexism as compared to the general population.

Table 1. Percentage of national sample in each sexism score quadrant

<i>Neither Hostile nor Benevolent (Quadrant A)</i>	<i>Only Benevolent (Quadrant B)</i>
26.85%	25.65%
<i>Only Hostile (Quadrant C)</i>	<i>Both Hostile and Benevolent (Quadrant D)</i>
17.94%	29.56%

Note. These percentages are derived from mean scores of the representative sample. Quadrant A refers to the percentage of participants who do not score on either sexism dimension. Quadrant B refers to the percentage of participants who score only on the benevolent sexism dimension. Quadrant C refers to the percentage of participants who score only on the hostile sexism dimension. Quadrant D refers to the percentage of participants who score on both hostile and benevolent sexism dimensions. To determine whether individuals score on a dimension, they must agree to the sexist statement at least to some extent. This means that they respond with an answer of agreeing slightly (4) or more. Ergo, Quadrant A represents individuals who average a score of less than or equal to three and a half on all twenty-two hostile and benevolent sexism statements. This table illustrates just how many people adhere to both hostile and benevolent sexism dimensions and few people adhere to neither dimension of sexism.

To ensure that I have not overlooked any socio-demographic characteristics that correlate with adherence to sexism I run regression analyses for both benevolent and hostile sexism. In Table 2, I focus on hostile sexism as the dependent variable. In Table 3, I focus on benevolent sexism as the dependent variable. In both tables, I incorporate these socio-demographic characteristics: education, gender, age, race, annual income, zip code density, and party affiliation. This regression analysis is used to ensure that my research does not overlook vital

predictors of adherence to sexism. It also continues parsing the differences between sexism and socio-demographic characteristics.

The regression analyses in Tables 2 and 3 confirm what is illustrated in the above figures. Like the figures, Table 2 highlights how holding a bachelor's degree or more, identifying as female, and affiliating with the Democratic Party negatively correlate with adherence to hostile sexism. In Table 3 this remains the case, but to a lesser extent.

Table 2. Regression models for Hostile Sexism incorporating independent socio-demographic variables

<i>Dependent Variable:</i>		
<i>Hostile Sexism</i>		
<i>Independent Variables:</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
Bachelor's Degree or More	-.274** (-.409 to -.139)	.069
Female	-.433** (-.550 to -.317)	.059
Age	.001 (-.002 to .005)	.002
Nonwhite	.139* (.007 to .271)	.067
Annual Income	-.020** (-.030 to -.011)	.005
Urban	-.001 (-.118 to .115)	.059
Democrat	-.562** (-.729 to -.396)	.085
Republican	.207** (.032 to .382)	.089
Constant	3.96 (3.70 to 4.22)	.131

Note. 95% confidence intervals are in parentheses. OLS regressions are shown.
**p < .01, *p < .05.

In Table 3, it is evident that identifying as a female is not statistically significant. Gender does not mitigate adherence to benevolent sexism at the same rate that it does to hostile sexism.

While educational attainment remains statistically significant across the tables, its negative relationship with adherence to benevolent sexism is weaker. Similarly, partisanship is not correlated with benevolent sexism.

Table 3. Regression models for Benevolent Sexism incorporating independent socio-demographic variables

<i>Dependent Variable:</i>		
<i>Benevolent Sexism</i>		
<i>Independent Variables:</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
Bachelor's Degree or More	-.189** (-.291 to -.088)	.015
Female	-.021 (-.109 to .066)	.044
Age	.000 (-.003 to .002)	.001
Nonwhite	.242** (.143 to .341)	.051
Annual Income	.010* (.003 to .018)	.004
Urban	.021 (-.067 to .108)	.045
Democrat	-.019 (-.144 to .105)	.064
Republican	.058 (-.074 to .189)	.067
Constant	3.48 (3.29 to 3.67)	.098

Note. 95% confidence intervals are in parentheses. OLS regressions are shown.

**p < .01, *p < .05.

Through these tables, I control for socio-demographics characteristics like age, region, annual income, and race. This allows me to confirm that sexism scores are not being influenced by confounding variables. For instance, in Figures 1-3 it is possible that education is not the motivating factor in adherence to sexism. Instead, education is displaying a relationship that is better explained through a generational effect. If this were the case, age would be more

statistically significant than education in one or both of the tables. Tables 2 and 3, however, resolve such competing theories. As is evident, age has no bearing on either dimension of sexism. There is no generational effect that explains expressions of benevolent or hostile sexism.

The remaining two independent variables that correlate with adherence to both sexism dimensions and are not discussed above are: annual income and race. Annual income is logical, considering that educational attainment is understood to be a proxy for socio-economic status (e.g., Marshall 2018). Because of the interrelatedness of education and income, it is expected that annual income interacts with sexism in the same way that educational attainment does. In terms of race, my model depicts that nonwhites are slightly more benevolent sexists than whites after controlling for other variables. However, this does not mean that benevolent sexism is more important for vote-choice among nonwhites. In fact, research from the 2016 election suggests that white voters were more motivated by sexism than nonwhites (e.g., Bracic, Israel-Trummel, and Shortle 2019).

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Scholars have long sought to understand the prevalence and impact of sexism on politics. This has been magnified in the wake of the 2016 election. Studies on the 2016 election illustrate that hostile sexism is significant based on its relationship to education and partisanship. In this paper, I aim to confirm this finding and expand sexism research by shifting our focus from hostile sexism to benevolent sexism. I first demonstrate that hostile sexism is predictive of education and party identification. To examine whether this relationship extends to benevolent sexism, I then establish that the two dimensions of sexism are uncorrelated.

From this finding, I propose that each dimension of sexism has a unique relationship to education and partisanship. Indeed, unlike hostile, benevolent sexism is not found to be as strongly correlated with education or party identification. My analysis explains that this is because adherence to benevolent sexism is common, regardless of an individual's socio-demographic identities. The only variance in adherence to benevolent sexism comes from college educated females. In my representative national sample, 23.75% of women holding a bachelor's degree or more do not measure on either sexism dimension. Educated females are over two times less likely than the general population to adhere to either dimension of sexism.

My results have significant implications for scholarly research on sexism and politics. For researchers and citizens alike, my analysis produces an important finding: people are adhering to at least one dimension of sexism at much higher levels than previously thought.

Through the lens of widespread adherence to benevolent sexism, I propose that we invert our traditional views about politics and sexism. The existing framework for sexism in voting behavior rests on the belief that sexism informs and motivates a small subset of the population—mostly uneducated, low income, white voters. However, I suggest that we build that framework on the opposite idea; instead, it is a small subset of the population—mostly college educated, female voters—who do *not* experience any level of adherence to and vote-choice motivation from sexism.

My analysis that there is only a small subset of the population that does not experience any level of adherence to either sexism dimension yields a critical question: how is this widespread adherence to benevolent sexism impacting political perceptions and voting behavior? While further research should be dedicated to this very question, Senator Elizabeth Warren's campaign for president offers an anecdotal answer. Even amongst the Democratic Party,

adherence to benevolent sexism has an impact on voting behavior. This is why the coalition of college educated females supporting Warren was not enough for her nomination. To overcome sexist backlash in politics, female candidates must draw in support extending far beyond the small subset of the population that does not express any dimension of sexism.

Until all dimensions of sexism are understood and researched as such, widespread adherence to benevolent sexism will continue perpetuating the marginalization of women and punishing those who violate gender norms.

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Appendix A: Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick and Fiske 1996, Appendix)

The statements on this page concern women, men, and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree on a 6-point scale for each statement. The 6-point scale ranges from: (1) disagree strongly; (2) disagree somewhat; (3) disagree slightly; (4) agree slightly; (5) agree somewhat; and (6) agree strongly

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."
3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily be rescued before men.
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist
5. Women are too easily offended.
6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
7. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.
8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.
13. Men are complete without women.
14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.
16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own wellbeing in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.
21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.
22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

Appendix B: Scoring Instructions for the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

Reverse the following items (0=5, 1=4, 2=3, 3=2, 4=1, 5=0): 3, 6, 7, 13, 18, 21

Hostile Sexism Score = average of the following items: 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21

Benevolent Sexism Score = average of the following items: 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20, 22

Common practice suggests that individuals who average scores above 3 are classified as either hostile sexists, benevolent sexists, or both. 3 is a significant threshold because it marks where participants move from slightly disagreeing to slight agreeing with a sexist index statement. It is possible for people to be placed in any one of these four categories: (1) adhere to neither benevolent nor hostile sexism; (2) adhere only to benevolent sexism; (3) adhere only to hostile sexism; or (4) adhere to both hostile and benevolent sexism. In the first combination, participants are averaging a hostile and benevolent sexism score of less than or equal to 3 (disagree slightly). In the second combination, participants are averaging a hostile sexism score of less than or equal to 3 and benevolent sexism score of greater than 3. In the third combination, participants are averaging a hostile sexism score greater than 3 and benevolent sexism score less than or equal to 3. Finally, in the fourth combination, participants are averaging a hostile and benevolent sexism score above 3.